

Stages and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Alternate Assessment [MCAS-Alt] Process

OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances the Massachusetts alternate assessment process because:

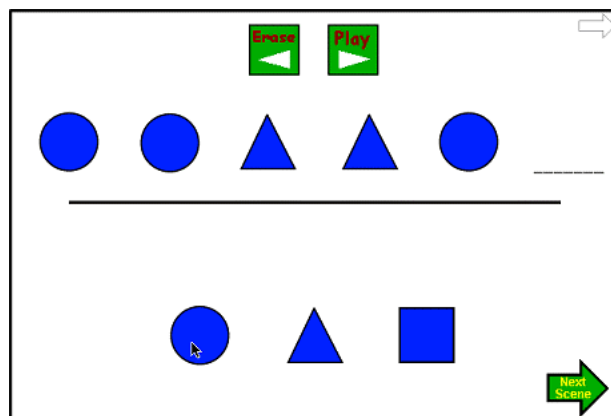
1. **Stages aligns with the contents of the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework.**
2. **Stages generates primary evidence for the learner's AIMS portfolio.**
3. **Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
4. **Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

1. Stages aligns with the contents of the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework.

Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to MA curriculum framework contents in Grade Level 3-4 Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. Please refer to the section, "How Stages Correlates with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Significant Disabilities" for detailed matching.

2. Stages generates primary evidence for the learner's AIMS portfolio.

During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a student-created product. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type/frequency, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructional team member may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file.



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid. Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement.

3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include various community settings.

4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables that help the instructor create an environment that corresponds with the motor skills of the learner.

SUMMARY

Stages augments the Massachusetts alternative assessment cycle. Together, the Stages set of activities and recommended curriculum practice software provide a comprehensive benchmark tool. Stages activities are designed to assist the instructional/IEP team in collecting primary evidence for the learner's AIMS portfolio, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

How Stages Correlates with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Significant Disabilities¹

English/Language Arts Learning Standards

General Language Standard 1: Discussion

Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: *Problem Solving:* Tic-Tac-Toe

Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Building Sentences, Writing Sentences
Making Stories

- The learner can demonstrate interaction and turn-taking with peers by participating in the Stage Five *Tic-Tac-Toe* activity.
- Using Stage Seven *Building Sentences*, the learner can form sentences using a word wall. The learner who is able to use an onscreen accessible keyboard, regular keyboard, or alternative keyboard can write sentences in response to instructor-written prompts in *Writing Sentences*. Using *Making Stories*, the learner can write multiple sentences with the aid of a photograph or imported graphic as a prompt. The text-to-speech feature gives the learner an opportunity to play back what is written.

General Language Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, & Contributing

Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions on interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Three: *All Activities*

Stage Six: *All 'Explore' Activities*

- In Stage Three, the learner can choose a desired activity and also make choices from items on the screen in response to a prompt.
- In Stage Six *Explore* Activities, the learner chooses from several items on the screen to read and listen to a short description of the selected item.

General Language Standard 3: Oral Presentation

Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.

General Reading and Literature Standard 8: Understanding a Text

Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Seven: *Making Stories*

- *Making Stories* gives the non-verbal learner a way to compose text and retell stories or events focused on a topic and then use text-to-speech capability to present the text to others. This activity can also help the instructor determine the a communication device is appropriate for the learner.

¹ Information from English Language Arts and Mathematics Resource Guides, 2002 Educator's Manual for MCAS Alternate Assessment, Massachusetts Department of Education, Fall 2001.

General Language Standard 4: Vocabulary & Concept Development

Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly in reading and writing.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Three: *Category Identification:* Animals, Clothing, Vehicles

Stage Five: *Reading:* Meaning

- *Category Identification* activities in Stage Three ask the learner to sort familiar objects into categories.
- Stage Five *Meaning* activities ask the learner to identify pictures that illustrate words from Dolch vocabulary lists.

General Language Standard 5: Structure & Origins of Modern English

Students will analyze standard English grammar and usage [and recognize how its vocabulary has developed and been influenced by other languages].

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Spatial Relationships

Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Spelling and Grammar

- *Spatial Relationships* in Stage Four gives the learner a way to demonstrate knowledge of relative location vocabulary such as *left/right*.
- Stage Seven *Spelling and Grammar* activities include spelling, homonyms, capitalization, noun-verb agreement, pronouns, word order, and a custom option that can be used for punctuation questions.

General Reading and Literature Standard 7: Beginning Reading

Students will understand the nature of written English and the relationship of letters and spelling patterns to the sounds of speech.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Reading Readiness:* Letter Sounds, Letter ID

Stage Six: *Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan

- *Letter* activities in Stage Four present the learner with letters and their sounds for the learner to identify.
- Stage Six *Stories* present the learner with self-paced passages about real people doing daily living tasks and activities.

General Reading and Literature Standard 10: Genre

Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.

General Reading and Literature Standard 14: Poetry

Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the theme, structure, and elements of poetry and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Two: *Nouns, Verbs, Attributes*

Stage Five: *Reading:* Sounds (Rhyming)

Stage Six: *Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan

- Stage Two and Stage Five *Sounds* activities give the learner an opportunity to listen to rhyming passages read aloud by the computer. The learner is then asked to identify the rhyming word pairs using a word wall.
- Stage Six *Stories* present short fictional passages about real people. The instructor can make observations about the learner's behavior during listening.

General Composition Standard 19: Writing

Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.

General Composition Standard 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose

Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Seven: Making Sentences: Building Sentences
Making Stories

- Stage Seven *Building Sentences* provides a device-accessible word wall for learners to demonstrate the ability to compose short sentences.
- *Making Stories* gives the learner a way to independently create samples of written work such as letters, poems and journals. The report displays settings such as time, date, font size and style.

General Composition Standard 22: Standard English Conventions

Students will use knowledge of standard English conventions in their writing, revising, and editing.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Reading Readiness: Letter ID
Stage Seven: Making Sentences: Writing Sentences, Spelling and Grammar

- Stage Four *Letter ID* asks the learner to identify upper- and lower-case letters.
- Stage Seven *Writing Sentences* gives the learner an unstructured writing activity to show correct word spacing and other standard mechanics. *Spelling and Grammar* is a collection of activities including Spelling, Homonyms, Capitalization, Noun-Verb Agreement, Pronoun Use and Word Order. Using the custom option, the instructor can create additional activities for punctuation or other skills.

General Reading and Literature Standard 11: Theme

Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of theme in a literary work and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Seven: Making Stories

- *Making Stories* gives the learner a way to express feelings related to life experiences, or respond to a story or passage.

General Reading and Literature Standard 13: Nonfiction

Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purpose, structure, and elements of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Charts and Graphs

- *Charts and Graphs* gives the learner an opportunity to apply knowledge of common graphic features to locate facts in order to answer questions.

Mathematics

Essence of the Learning Standards for Grade Level 3-4

Number Sense (Strand 1: Number Sense & Operations)

- Manipulate numbers at a higher level by counting, writing, grouping, sorting, comparing, ordering
- Use a variety of numerical forms/classes
- Recognize and use decimals

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Number ID, Counting

Stage Five: *Problem Solving:* Number Guess

Stage Six: *Explore and Assess:* Money Orientation, Counting Money

- In Stage Four, the learner demonstrates the ability to count from 1 to 10 and identify numbers from 0 to 10.
- Stage Five *Number Guess* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to compare numbers, given feedback about relative magnitude (“That number is too high/low”).
- Decimal notation is used in Stage Six *Money* activities.

Estimation (Strand 1: Number Sense & Operations)

- Understand the meaning of multiplication and division (also in Standards for **Operations**)
- Demonstrate knowledge of multiplication and division facts
- Add and subtract

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: *Math:* Math Facts (+, -, x, ÷), Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

- In these activities, the learner is asked to add and subtract one- and two-digit numbers with and without regrouping. The learner is also asked to multiply and divide one- and two-digit numbers by one-digit numbers. *Word Problems* includes questions with and without illustrations that help the learner solve the problem.

Patterns, Relations & Functions (Strand 2: Patterns, Relations & Algebra)

- Identify, reproduce, create, describe, extend patterns

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

- Stage Four gives the learner an opportunity to first observe simple repeating sequences of geometric shapes, sound, and color in *Explore Patterns*. The learner is asked to complete sequences of shapes by choosing the correct shape in *Continue/Fill-In Patterns*. Finally, *Create Patterns* gives the learner a chance to compose sequences based on shape, color and sound.

Relationships and Mathematical Models (Strand 2: Patterns, Relations & Algebra)

- Represent mathematical relationships in a variety of formats

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Estimating

Stage Six: *Assess:* Money Equivalents

- Stage Four *Estimating* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to compare objects and groups of objects using vocabulary such as ‘more/less’ and ‘big/small.’
- In Stage Six *Money Equivalents* the learner is asked to identify equivalent amounts of currency that adds up to given amounts.

Characteristics of Geometric Shapes (Strand 3: Geometry)

- Describe, draw, name, and compare two-dimensional shapes, such as polygons and curved figures

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Shape ID

Stage Five: Problem Solving: Mystery Shape

- Stage Four *Shape ID* gives the learner an opportunity to identify two-dimensional shapes in drawings or photographs in scenes and isolation.
- In Stage Five *Mystery Shape* the learner compares the attributes of two-dimensional shapes in order to deduce the correct choice.

Spatial Relationships/Coordinate Geometry (Strand 3: Geometry)

- Graphs coordinates of points

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Spatial Relationships

- A low-complexity entry point to this Standard, Stage Four *Spatial Relationships* asks the learner to identify where an object is located in two-dimensional space relative to another object, using vocabulary such as 'left/right' or 'up/down.'

Spatial Relationships/Coordinate Geometry (Strand 3: Geometry)

- Graphs coordinates of points

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Spatial Relationships

- A low-complexity entry point to this Standard, Stage Four *Spatial Relationships* asks the learner to identify where an object is located in two-dimensional space relative to another object, using vocabulary such as 'left/right' or 'up/down.'

Measurement (Strand 4)

- Demonstrate greater understanding of attributes of measurement, such as length, [weight,] volume, capacity, time, etc.
- Tell time [/read the calendar]
- [Estimate and] measure perimeter and area

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Geometry

Stage Six: Explore and Assess: Telling Time

- Stage Five *Geometry* gives the learner an opportunity to apply knowledge of the concepts of perimeter, area and volume. Labeled diagrams help the learner make calculations.
- In Stage Six *Telling Time*, correct responses and distracter targets are coordinated to help the instructor determine patterns in incorrect learner responses. Digital and analog clocks are included.

Data & Statistics (Strand 5: Data Analysis, Statistics & Probability)

- Draw conclusions about data in a series of different formats

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Charts and Graphs

- Stage Five *Charts and Graphs* gives the learner a way to demonstrate the ability to interpret the data presented line graphs, pie charts, and bar graphs in order to answer questions.